
CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION PLAN/NEXT STEPS

As summarized in the United States Department of Transportation Strategic Plan (2000-2005), the transportation system is comprised of 3.9 million miles of public roads and 2 million miles of oil and natural gas pipelines. There are networks consisting of 120 thousand miles of major railroads, and over 25 thousand miles of commercially navigable waterways. Operations for this entire transportation network are influenced by weather.

Aviation and maritime agencies have a longstanding interaction with the meteorological community. On the other hand, land transportation has not garnered near as much focus. But this is changing, as is evidenced by the participation in this symposium.

A great deal of progress has been made during the last 2 years in developing a national surface transportation decision support capability. At the direction of the Interdepartmental Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research, OFCM initiated a major effort to examine the weather information needs of the surface transportation community. With the help of the Federal Highway Administration and the interagency Joint Action Group for Weather Information for Surface Transportation (JAG/WIST), this project is nearing completion.

The overarching objectives of the symposium were to:

- Provide the status of the needs and requirements analysis that was conducted by the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology on behalf of the Federal meteorological community
- Solicit feedback on the needs and requirements analysis to obtain additional validation
- Provide an update and summarize progress and activities over the last 12 months (since the First WIST symposium.)
- Identify initiatives/programs that are currently underway or being planned
- Illuminate gaps where additional focus is required
- Identify next steps/actions toward improving weather information for decision-makers

The panel members, including the moderators, presenters, and rapporteurs, along with all of the symposium participants, helped ensure these objectives of the symposium were met. It is only through the combined efforts of all the federal agencies and our industry partners that advancements and modifications can be put into place. These changes will lead to further enhancements of WIST decision support systems and capabilities, and fully support the needs of surface transportation decision makers.

At the conclusion of the symposium, it was clear there were still some deficiencies that need focused efforts. Gaps remain that will require continued action to ensure advancements in technical knowledge, the implementation of new technologies, and the completion of the identification of the weather information needs and requirements for the surface transportation community.

Eight overarching areas of concern were identified:

- (1) Need for a focused effort to capture proliferating surface weather observations and networks, and to incorporate these data into a national database; need to consider:
 - Equipment (fixed, mobile, remote)--siting criteria--include legacy systems
 - Communications (incorporate ITS Architecture)--protocol and standardization
 - Data--standards, quality control, availability (redistribution), archiving
- (2) Need an examination of the private/public roles and responsibilities
- (3) Need to enhance public outreach and education--build coalition with media--leverage opportunities through organizational/association conferences--create interdisciplinary curricula
- (4) Need to enhance technology transfer processes (concepts, capabilities, practices, tools)--government and civil sector (e.g., DOD, national laboratories and other entities)
- (5) Need weather information that is timely, accurate, and relevant
- (6) Need to tailor weather information for client's decision support requirements--must focus on impacts to mission
- (7) Need to revolutionize dissemination systems--real-time information in the "cab" (RTIC)--push/pull, Web-based, etc.
- (8) Need for a dedicated and focused research and development program--must have mechanism to identify research priorities

Action Plan/Next Steps

While the discussion above addresses the eight major overarching areas of concern, there was also consensus at the symposium that there are five specific action items that must be reflected for completeness and given the appropriate priority for continued progress. In the interest of moving ahead without delay, a mechanism is suggested for addressing each action item; that is, an entity is designated as being responsible to assure that these critical items get the attention they deserve.

The Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology (OFCM):

- Publish symposium proceedings by February 2001
- Complete compilation of WIST requirements and publish requirements document by June 2001
- OFCM will focus efforts on solving surface weather observation issues

The Joint Action Group for Weather Information for Surface Transportation (JAG/WIST):

- Develop strategy on remaining issues

The Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, the National Weather Service, OFCM, and Other Applicable Agencies:

- Participate in activities to enhance public outreach and education

Conclusion

The Symposium on Weather Information for Surface Transportation was successful in bringing together key stakeholders from the federal agencies, private industry, and the academic/research community. Significant progress has been made to improve weather information for surface transportation decision-makers. The implementation of actions/next steps (described above) will provide the impetus for further improvements. The bottom line: improvements in surface transportation weather support will result in safer and more efficient operations by all users.

Link to Presentation:

www.ofcm.gov/WistII/Presentations/Day3/2_Next_Step/Next%20Steps_Action%20Plan.ppt